Ed/Psych
Lib.
BF
20
F85p

PSYCHOLOGY AT TWO INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC
CONGRESSES

SHEPHERD IVORY FRANZ

A

0
0
0
9
3
6
3
1
2
8

0-30698-361-2

THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

✓
UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA
AT
LOS ANGELES
LIBRARY

PSYCHOLOGY AT TWO INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC
CONGRESSES

SHEPHERD IVORY FRANZ

Reprinted from THE JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY, PSYCHOLOGY AND SCIENTIFIC METHODS
Vol. IV., No. 24, November 21, 1907

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LIBRARY

Ed./Psych.
Library

BF

20

F85_p

PSYCHOLOGY AT TWO INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC
CONGRESSES

THE seventh international congress of physiologists was held in Heidelberg, August 13-16, and the first international congress of psychiatry, neurology, psychology, and the nursing of the insane was held in Amsterdam, September 2-7. In both congresses topics of interest to psychologists were discussed, but the number of purely psychological papers was very small. Some of the papers were of interest to those who investigate the functions of the sense organs and the cerebrum, most were of importance only to those who are chiefly concerned with the physiological and clinical study of the central nervous system.

In the physiological congress there was not a special section for papers of psychological bearing. The special section of psychophysics at the Amsterdam congress was concerned with clinico-psychology more than with normal psychology, and in this section the only professional psychologist of note on the program was Pro-

fessor Jodl, of Vienna. Professor Janet, of Paris, another professor of psychology, read before the section of neurology and psychiatry.

In the general sessions of the congress of psychiatry, etc., two papers dealt with matters of some general psychological interest, that of Professor von Bechterew, of St. Petersburg, "*Recherches objectives sur l'activité psychique*," and that of Ziehen, of Berlin, "*Methoden der Intelligenzprüfung*." The former considered the question whether or not psychology is a science more than the *recherches objectives*, and concluded, as have many others, that the true method of psychology is introspection, that as such it is a part of philosophy and can not be a science. Experimental psychology, on the other hand, is concerned only with associations and reactions to situations, and it is a science. The scientific psychology may be divided into a number of different fields according to the material with which one works, and we have, therefore, the psychology of the normal adult, of the child, of the abnormal, of different peoples, etc.

Professor Ziehen's paper is of more interest to psychologists, for in it he dealt to a large extent with the examination of the insane and strongly urged all psychiatrists to do more extensive and more accurate work in examining patients along psychological lines. He cited some cases that he had been able to differentiate by most careful mental examinations, and used these results as examples of what more accurate examination and analysis will do.

In the special sessions devoted to papers on psychology and psychophysics the following general topics were considered: the present state of the James-Lange theory of the emotions; the psychology of puberty; the difference between perception and idea; the secondary function. For these discussions, referees or *rapporteurs* were appointed respectively as follows: P. Sollier (Brussels); Marro (Turin); Jodl (Vienna) and Mercier (London); Gross (Graz). In place of Neiser, Sommer (Giessen) discussed the subject, "*The Past of the Psychopath*."

It is unfortunate that Sollier should have been chosen to consider the James-Lange theory of the emotions in view of the fact that he had so recently published in full his views on the subject. In his paper before the section Sollier presented nothing that is not to be found in his book, "*La mécanique des émotions*."¹ It would have been more profitable to have had some one discuss Sollier's position, which to the present writer seems no more tenable than that of James and Lange.

In the discussion of the difference between perception and idea,

¹ See review in this JOURNAL, Vol. IV., page 109.

Mercier's paper was read, in his absence, by Dr. Conolly Norman. A perception differs, Mercier holds, from an idea or image in that the former contains some presentation of sense, there is an objectifying of the perceived thing, and there is a more vivid nucleus. The time it takes to invest a presented object with certain qualities, *e. g.*, a cushion with the quality of softness, determines whether we shall consider the quality a perception or an image. If the attribution is instantaneous it is a perception. Jodl considered the descriptive and genetic differences between idea and perception, and then concluded that we can not always differentiate the things in these ways. He considered the subject from the standpoint of scientific psychology and of every-day life and concluded that the solution of the problem was not in the field of individual psychology, but that the differences could be thoroughly appreciated only from a careful study of the social self. How this is to be done the speaker did not make clear, but doubtless more light will be given in the full account of the paper in the congress transactions.

The papers in the sectional meetings other than those mentioned above were not of sufficient importance to warrant more than mention of the titles: Gutzmann (Berlin), "Ueber Hören und Verstehen"; Lechner (Kolosvar, Hungary), "Ueber negative Sinnes-täuschungen"; Francke (Hague), "Statistisch-sexuelle Traum-differenzen"; Roemer (Holland), "Verhältnis zwischen Mondalter und Sexualität"; Schuyten (Antwerp), "Problemes de pédologie"; Albada (Holland), "Theorie zur Erklärung psychologischer Probleme"; Joire (Paris), "Sur une force nerveuse exteriorée"; Bychowsky (Warsaw), "Reflex-studien"; de Boer (Amsterdam), "Association gegensätzlicher Begriffe"; Novoa Santos (Spain), "Temps reflex et temps conscient."

At the physiological congress only two papers of special interest to experimental psychologists were presented. These are papers dealing with method rather than with results, and are therefore the more valuable. Professor Zwaardemaker, who is best known to psychologists by his work on smell sensations, described his newly constructed room for sound experiments and showed models and lantern slides of the construction. The room is absolutely still, and is probably the most successfully built room for sound investigations. A full description is to be found in a forthcoming number of *Science*, to which the reader is referred for information.

The second paper of interest to psychologists was that of Gotch (London), who described and illustrated the use of an instrument for testing retinal excitability. The instrument is a modified form of the spinthariscopes. The ordinary form of spinthariscopes was changed so that it has three adjustments, one for increasing or de-

creasing the size of the field, one for removing the radium toward or away from the center of the field, and a third for moving a screen near or away from the radium. With a given adjustment the instrument has constancy of illumination-intensity, but there is an abrupt and momentary excitation. With the various adjustments there is the possibility of limiting the intensity so as to have the minimal or threshold value. Some of the advantages of the instrument are that it is portable and small, easily used and understood. With it Gotch demonstrated at the congress the increased excitability in the dark adapted eye of certain portions of the retina, an increased excitability of the nasal as compared with the temporal part of the retina, the effect of illuminating one eye in decreasing the excitability of the fovea, and the remarkable degree to which the excitability of one eye is temporarily raised by illuminating the other eye.

The fact that so few papers of a psychological nature were offered at the physiological congress is explained by the condition of membership, that only professional physiologists could take part, and because the modern development of physiology has been along chemical lines. The congress of psychiatry and psychology was intended to be for psychologists as well as for neurologists and psychiatrists, but there were registered less than fifteen psychologists out of a total membership of eight hundred. This is the more remarkable since there was a special section devoted to psychology and psychophysics. The paucity of papers of interest to psychologists is due to the lack of immediate interest of psychologists in abnormal psychology on the one hand, and on the other hand to the fact that the usual psychology of the clinic differs from the psychology of the universities. It is true that psychologists must depend upon themselves for the solution of problems of normal psychology, the problems of special interest to themselves. Some hold, unfortunately, I believe, that the only material that will be advantageously used in solving these problems is the normal adult mind, but this view is held largely because they know nothing of the abnormal. I have expressed the opinion, and still hold it to be the true one, that the specially trained psychologist will find new points of view as well as new facts in the study of abnormal or clinical material, and that it is unfortunate so few psychologists are willing to ally themselves with the psychiatrists. Normal psychology will be advanced from studies of the insane and other abnormal peoples only by having studies on these classes conducted by the psychologist who has the normal as his specific goal. The value of the abnormal material will, however, not be understood from a far-

off look, and especially from a view of the work of others who are interested exclusively in a different set of problems.

The psychiatrists are aware of the importance to them of the careful analysis of cases by the newer psychological methods, and the clinics are being opened to properly trained psychologists wherever they present themselves. It must be kept in mind, for a proper appreciation of much of the so-called abnormal psychology, that the clinician is interested in psychology primarily in so far as it gives him some material for the proper understanding of his cases, and he is interested in the same way and to just the same degree in microscopical studies of nerve cells, which he understands can never really explain the presence or absence of a particular idea or set of ideas. The interest of the physician being, therefore, in cases or in disease types, in the care and cure of individuals, necessarily produces a type of abnormal psychology that many academic psychologists are unwilling to admit to be psychology. Perhaps this is rightly so. On the other hand, the advantages to normal psychology will only be felt after psychologists have taken opportunities of investigating the abnormal and of determining in the abnormal the things that are really helpful in understanding the normal. In other words, normal psychology is not the goal of the clinician, and psychologists may not expect much light on the problems of normal mental life from studies by physicians. However adequately trained in normal psychology he may be, the physician desires to understand the abnormal more than make contributions to normal psychology.

SHEPHERD IVORY FRANZ.

GOVERNMENT HOSPITAL FOR THE INSANE.
GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY, LOS ANGELES
EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY LIBRARY

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

Form L9-10m-9, '65 (F7203s8) 4939A

UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA
AT
LOS ANGELES
LIBRARY

UCLA-ED/PSYCH Library

BF 20 F85d

A 000 936 312 8